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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000756

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TAGS: [PREL](#), [KMPI](#), [BA](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES FORUM FOR THE FUTURE, KORAN  
DESECRATION, IRAQ WITH BAHRAIN FM

REF: A. MANAMA 705

[1](#)B. MANAMA 675

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador, during a May 23 meeting with Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, discussed the Forum for the Future (FfF), the retracted Newsweek magazine story about Koran desecration at GTMO, Iraq, and the DOD Bahrain School. The Foreign Minister reiterated Bahrain's interest in Middle East (including Bahraini) participation in the G8 Summit at Gleneagles. He expressed concern about a possible impact on Bahrain of growing sectarianism in Iraq. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador congratulated the ForMin for the GOB successfully hosting the May 10 FfF steering committee meeting in Manama. Shaikh Mohammed said things were moving forward for the November FfF conference. He was particularly pleased the United States had tabled two new initiatives, the Foundation for the Future and the Fund for the Future. These were items that would interest the people of the region and prove that the FfF was generating results, not just talk. He reiterated the GOB's interest in attending the July G8 Summit at Gleneagles, Scotland (reftels), and noted that Arab and African leaders had both attended (separate) portions of the 2004 G8 Summit at Sea Island, Georgia. There was no reason why the Arabs could not participate in this year's summit even if the focus issues of the conference were Africa and climate change.

[1](#)3. (C) Regarding the FfF conference, the ForMin said the U.S., UK, Morocco and Bahrain should consult early on about the communique. He wanted to keep the number of parties involved in drafting the communique very limited for now. It was important to iron out any issues well in advance of the conference, he said.

[1](#)4. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said he was sorry to hear about the Newsweek story concerning alleged desecration of the Koran at GTMO. He suggested that the USG announce publicly that it would investigate and take action against anyone who may have done such things. The Ambassador responded that the Secretary had made a very strong public statement about the

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issue and noted that Newsweek had publicly retracted its story.

[1](#)5. (C) Turning to Iraq, the Minister said that Bahrain was not happy about Sunni/Shia violence and growing sectarian tensions in Iraq. The GOB was concerned that sectarianism in Iraq could have an impact on Bahrain. He was pleased with recent public statements by some Iraqi Sunnis that they would take part in drafting the constitution. Shaikh Mohammed said that the Bahraini cabinet had issued a statement supporting the Iraq Transitional Government and that he had met with President Talabani on the margins of the Iraqi Neighbors Conference in Istanbul. He called Foreign Minister Zebari a friend and said that King Hamad had good relations and communicated with Ayatollah Sistani.

[1](#)6. (C) The ForMin said it was very important that the Bahrain School remain a DOD institution. He welcomed efforts aimed at developing options to deal with the budget deficit and suggested that the U.S. Navy, in addressing the dependent issue, begin by returning a portion of the departed dependents. While no country is immune from terrorism, he said the Bahraini public supports the people-to-people contact that comes as a result of the presence of Navy dependents in the country.

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